



Risk Assessment - Club Trips on local waters

Thames : Isleworth to Chertsey Lock

Wey Navigation : Godalming Wharf to Thames Lock

Basingstoke Canal : New Haw to Greystoke Tunnel

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Thanks to all contributors to the document.



1 Introduction

Description: Hampton Canoe Club (HCC) routinely run day trip outings on the Thames and other local waterways for club members paddling open and closed cockpit kayaks and open canoes (and potentially SUP's).

This risk assessment covers trips on all these waterways in a single document.

This simplifies the job of a trip leader taking paddlers on our local waters.

This document will be reviewed and updated at least annually

Numbers: Trip will normally have up to about 10 participants but can be more or less. A trip leader should nominate a deputy to help manage the trip if there are more than 6 paddlers.

Distances: Trips are typically about 12 miles, with 2 hours paddling, a break for lunch and a further two hours paddling to return to the launch point or make it to the get-out-point.

Timings: A typical trip lasts from 2-5 hours including breaks for food, drink, and rest. The longest trips can take up to 8 hours which can include up to 6 hours of paddling and 2 hours of stops and breaks at pubs and cafes for rest, food and drink.

Trip leaders: Leaders will be very familiar with the sections of waterway they intend to paddle or will have researched the area. This is the main risk mitigation factor as the leader will know where the main hazards are and where the nearest access point is to evacuate a paddler if required. A trip leader will be an experienced paddler. See the club Safety document for further details.

Paddlers: Club paddlers are generally experienced adult club members. New members with less experience may go in a K2 so that they can be with a more experienced paddler.

Grading: All trips are graded according to the standard club grading scale.



2 Paddling after dark

Extra care needs to be exercised when paddling after dark on the Thames and other local waters.

- All paddlers must show a white light fore and aft after dark on any waterway.
- These lights need to be bright but not dazzle other paddlers and river users.
- They need to be switched on at least 30 mins before sunset.
- A head torch is also useful as if there is a capsized this allows a paddler to be seen more easily in the water.

If the weather is very cold, rainy, or windy or there are stream warning boards displayed for the reaches of the river Thames to be paddled, then a separate risk assessment **must** be completed for trips paddling after dark.

A specific current risk near the club is fast moving rowing eights heading upstream from Molesey boat club. These are difficult to identify at a distance as their lights are very low down and they can be travelling much faster than other boats are allowed to go on the river. Take care when leaving the pontoon or crossing the river back to the club when coming downstream.

Stream warning boards (River Thames)

If red or yellow stream warning boards are displayed then extra care must be taken (please see notes in the club safety document), strong paddlers can cope with yellow boards, but trip leaders need to assess conditions and the competency of their group.

When red boards are displayed then a separate risk assessment is required for trips on the river Thames and only highly experienced paddlers in stable boats should under-take trips.

There are specific points on the river such as the get-in at Chertsey lock where it is important to adjust the route (here you need to get-in below the lock, not the upper get-in) if there is a high flow

These need to be highlighted in any trip specific risk assessment when that reach of the river is on red boards.



3 Tidal River Thames - Isleworth to Teddington Lock

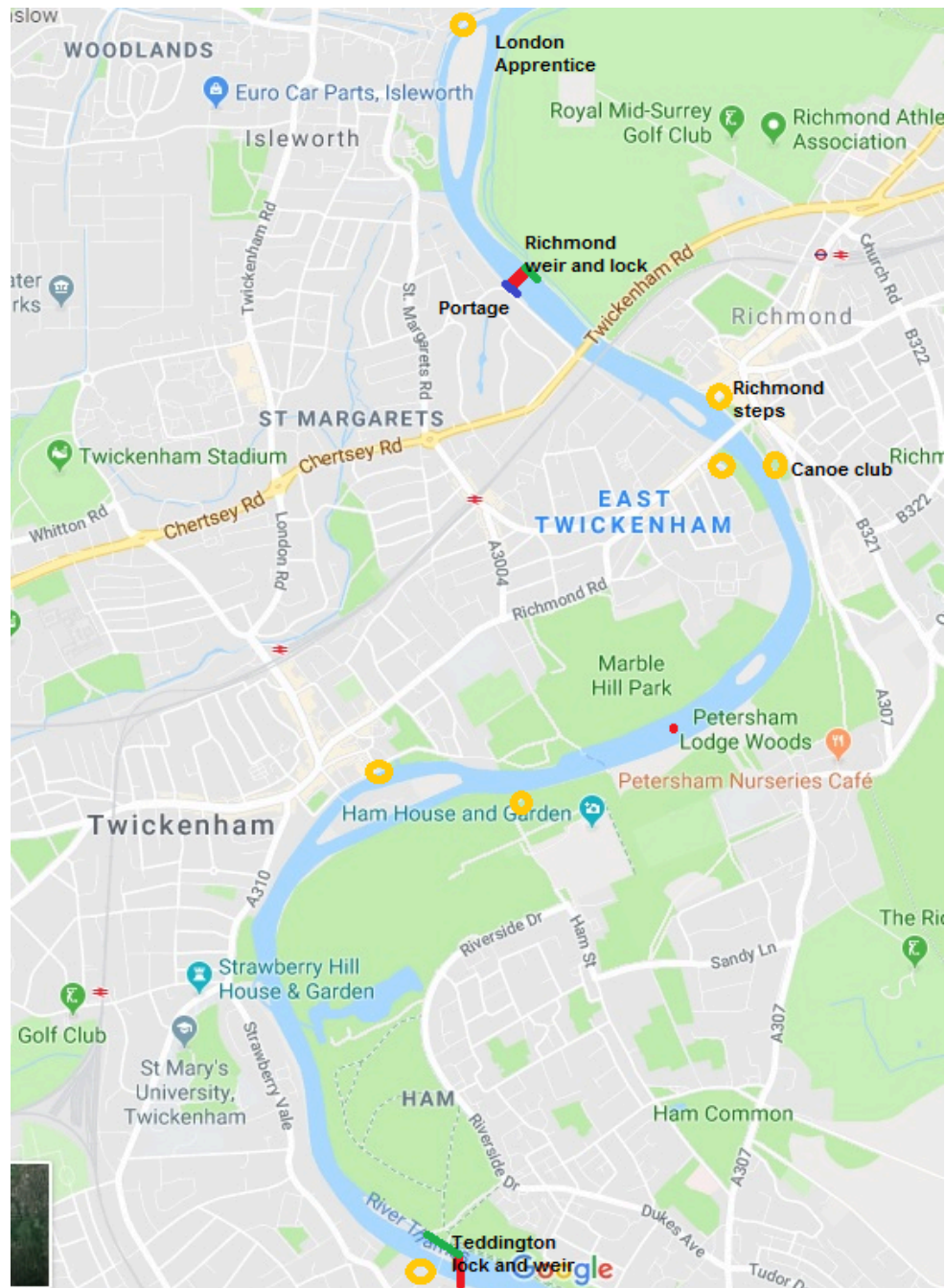
This part of the Thames below Teddington lock is tidal. It is a very busy section of river with a lot of river traffic, rowing boats and other river users including large passenger ferries/tour boats.

The trip leader needs to know the times of high water. The PLA website, and the BBC website, which have tide times, both give times in UTC (i.e.GMT), so allowance for BST must be made in summer.

There is a towpath on the Surrey side which gives reasonable access along the river except between Teddington lock and Ham house where the bank is very high and overgrown with trees.

There are numerous club boat houses and points where the river can be accessed.

There can be strong flows after heavy rain on the ebb tide, especially during drain-off when Richmond lock gates are left open. Check the Environment agency website for information on ebb tide flow.



River Thames from Isleworth to Teddington to Teddington Lock

Also check the PLA website for river closures, which are often between Isleworth and Putney. The PLA can be precise and rigid in actively enforcing such closures. Going beyond Isleworth requires a detailed understanding of the tides, and of the PLA's Code of Conduct for paddling.



Main hazards

Hazard	Managing the risk
Richmond lock / tidal gates Weir	Normally the tidal gates are shut except for 2 hours either side of high water which means that above Richmond there is no tidal effect whilst the gates are closed. When the gates are closed paddlers must portage via the slipway. This can be extremely muddy and slippery, take care! Be alert for boats entering and exiting the lock. There can also be a strong flow from water leaking out from upstream so take care when launching as the water can be quite turbulent.
Richmond reach	Multiple rowing, sailing and kayak clubs make this an extremely busy part of the river, keep close to the bank and alert to other river users. There can be a strong ebb tide flow during heavy rains and when the ebb tide is flowing.
Teddington weir and lock	Passenger cruise boats use Teddington lock to access the non-tidal Thames, keep clear of them as the speed limit on this part of the river is 8 knots. Keep away from the weir as the water can be very fast flowing as it is squeezed between the lock island and the Teddington bank.



4 River Thames Teddington Lock to Chertsey Lock

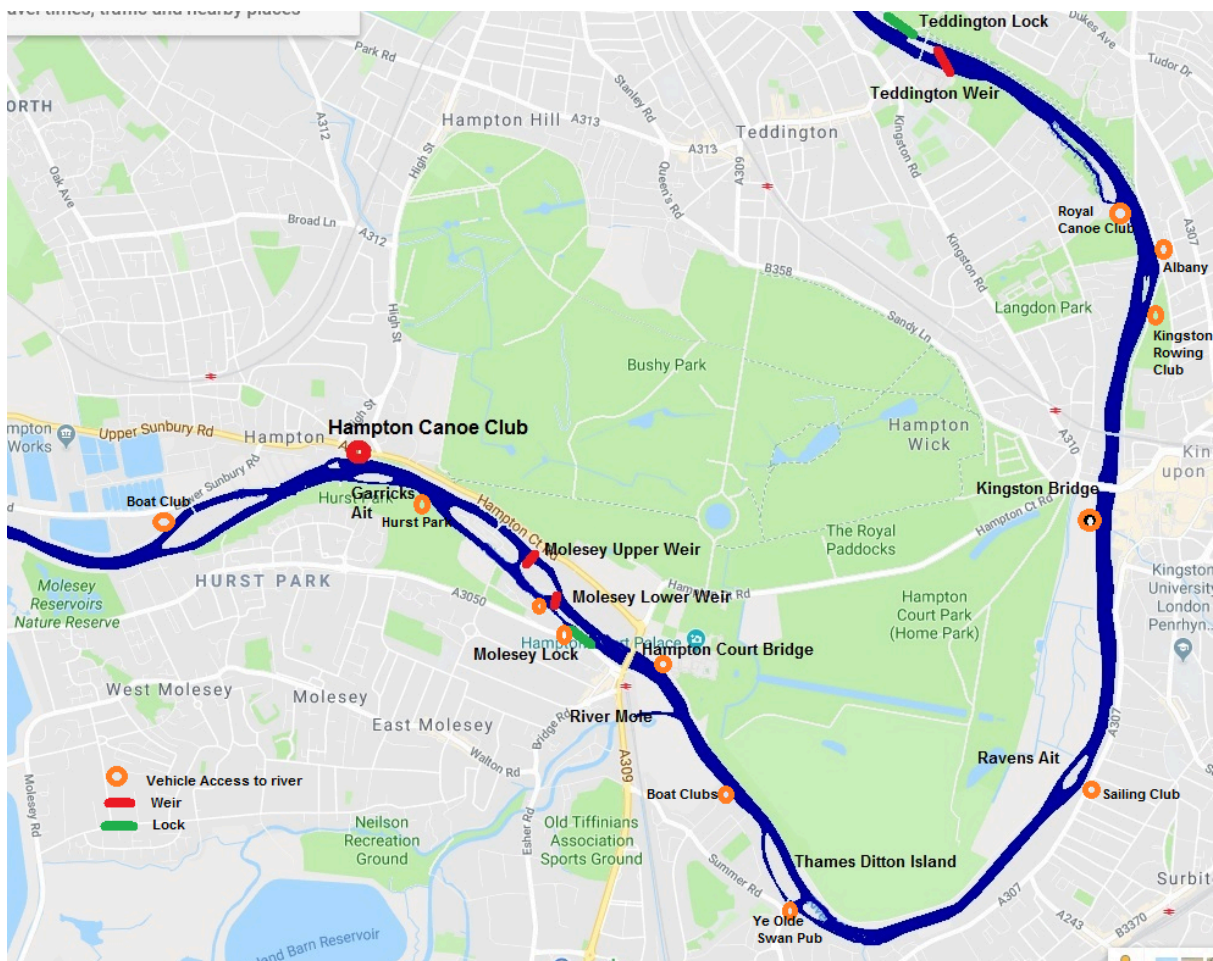
This part of the Thames is non-tidal, but busy with river traffic, rowing boats and other river users including large passenger ferries/tour boats.

There are many overhanging trees and a towpath on one side which gives reasonable access along the entire length of the river.

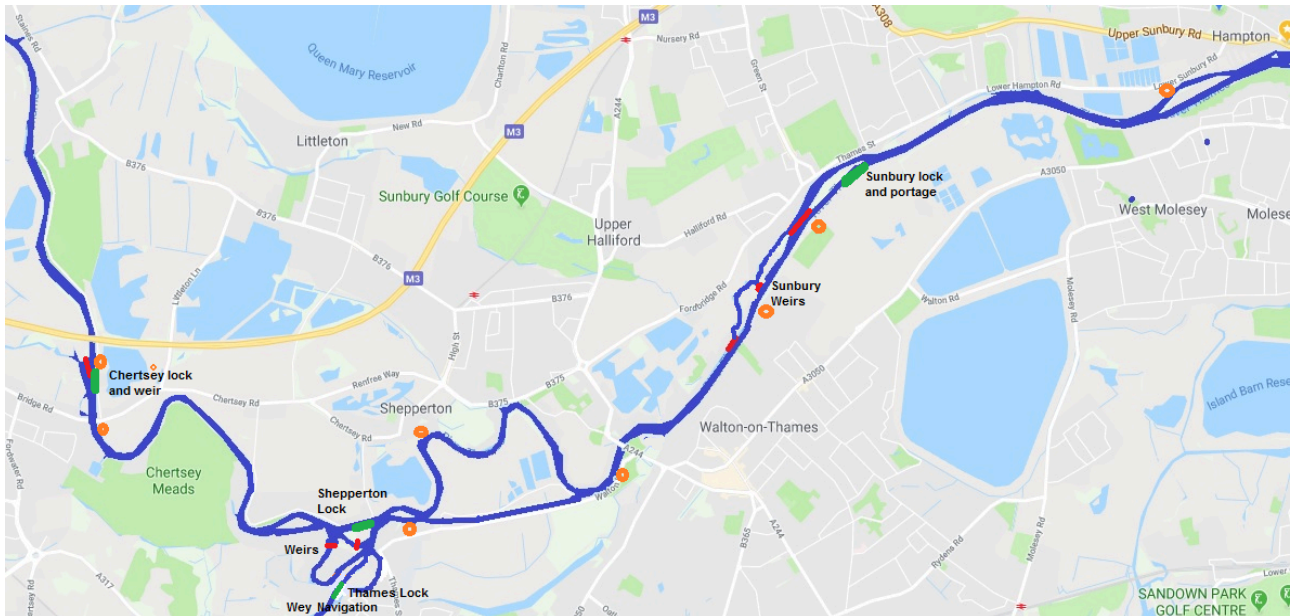
There are also numerous boat houses and points where the river can be accessed.

There can be strong flows after heavy rain. Check the Environment agency website for information on yellow/red board status.

Check on river restrictions and closures as there are numerous regattas throughout the year when there can be a few hundred rowing boats racing on the river. This information is available on the Environment agency website.



River Thames from Teddington Lock to Hampton



River Thames from Hampton to Chertsey

Shepperton Backwaters

At Shepperton there are multiple small streams leading from the weirs and up to the pool beside the Wey Navigation, above Thames Lock. These are interesting stretches of water but can be difficult to navigate if there is any significant flow and should be avoided in these conditions. Keep clear of the weirs where the water can be turbulent and fast and is not suitable for club K1's.



Main hazards

Hazard	Managing the risk
Teddington Weir	Approaching or leaving Teddington lock keep to the Surrey bank to avoid being pulled onto the top of the weir
Royal/Tamesis/KBC	Multiple rowing, sailing and kayak clubs make this an extremely busy part of the river, keep close to the bank and alert to other river users
Kingston piers	Passenger cruise boats frequent various piers in Kingston. These are large boats with a big wake so be alert for them
Ravens Ait island	The river narrows here and the flow can be very fast after heavy rains
River Mole outflow	The flow opposite Hampton court can increase dramatically after heavy rains
Hampton Court Piers	Large cruise boats frequent piers on both sides of the river so be alert to them
Molesey lock	Keep clear of the lock gates as the lock empties rapidly creating a lot of turbulence
Molesey weir	There can be a strong flow below the weir and keep clear above the weir, staying on the further bank
Hampton Water works	There are numerous outflows and inflows on this section of the river, usually well marked so keep clear of these
Sunbury weir	Keep clear below and above the weir, there is quite a narrow pinch point by the Weir pub so upstream boats need to keep clear of the weir and any oncoming boats
Shepperton lock and weirs	Keep clear below and above the weirs, and away from the lock gates. This is a busy part of the river with various types of craft crossing paths here so be alert.
Chertsey weir and lock	Careful portaging Chertsey lock if entering the water below the weir as at the upper portage it is easy to be swept onto a pontoon downstream. There is an entry/exit point at the lower end of the lock which is easier if the flow is fast



5 Wey Navigation Thames lock to Godalming wharf

The Wey navigation is a canalised river with canal and river sections, i.e. some parts are a canal with gentle flows and other parts are a river with occasional strong flows. When there are strong flows, the National Trust often closes the Wey river to all traffic, though the canal sections remain safe. But it's important not to stray onto the river sections.

The longest canal section, and the most useful for the club, is from Black Boy Bridge outside Weybridge to Pyrford lock and up to just before Walsham Lock gates. (Immediately beyond Walsham Lock gates is a LARGE weir; the lock gates are usually open; do not go through unless you are very certain it is safe to do so.)

- There are multiple locks which need to be portaged.
- There is a moderate amount of motorised canal traffic, kayaks and rowing boats.
- There are many small weirs and some larger weirs, such as Walsham weir.
- There are many overhanging trees and bushes but in general the navigation is very well maintained with a towpath along the entire length which makes for easy access.
- There can be strong flows after heavy rains, check the National Trust website for further formation as they issue frequent bulletins when the river sections are in flood.
- See complete list of locks, distance, facilities and access points in Appendix A

Main hazards

Hazard	Managing the risk
Road crossing at Catteshall lock	Help paddlers across the road
Multiple small weirs and bridges	Point these out and guide paddlers away from the hazard
Walsham weir before gates	Point this out and guide paddlers away from the hazard
Road crossing at New Haw	Help paddlers across the road
Road crossing at Town lock	Help paddlers across the road
Launch after Town lock – very high bank	Help paddlers re-launch
Thames lock – downstream get-in/out not suitable for kayaks/canoes – do not attempt	Use the gate into the rowing club for access to the river Thames



6 Basingstoke Canal

The Basingstoke canal is a very quiet canal which runs from the Greywell tunnel to a junction with the Wey Navigation above New Haw. There is a flight of 28 locks at the downstream end for the first 11 miles and then a pond of 20 miles with just 1 lock (Ash #29).

- There is very little canal traffic with a few kayaks and rowing boats around Mytchett and the occasional barge / pleasure boat.
- There are no weirs, only a few small outflows/inflows.
- There are three swing/lift bridges which can be paddled under but there is a risk of a paddler hitting their head unless they keep well bent over and/or bashing their paddle unless it is kept low to the water (see details below)
- There are many overhanging trees and bushes but in general the canal is very well maintained with a towpath along the entire length which makes for easy access.
- There is never any significant flow except below an emptying lock.
- Due to the low flow and higher elevation, in winter the canal can freeze solid and may not be paddled.
- This is a very benign and low risk stretch of water, ideal for beginners/improvers trips.
- See complete list of locks, distance, facilities and access points in Appendix B

Main hazards (updated 07.12.2024)

Hazard	Managing the risk
Canal Centre Swing Bridge (100m below Mytchett canal centre)	This can be paddled with care but a portage is recommended.
Ash lock	Portaging here involves crossing a road so take care and ask people to help each other with boats.
Zephon Common Swing Bridge (Zebon Copse) (approx. 1.5km above F&H pub)	This can be paddled with care but a portage is recommended.
Nth Warnborough lift bridge (on Tunnel Lane) (200m above road bridge)	This can be paddled with care but paddlers have banged their heads on the bridge and/or capsized so a portage is recommended.
Water quality above Ash lock	In summer and times of drought there is no flow at all on the canal and the water quality is very poor. Paddlers should avoid ingesting water and wash hands well before eating.



7 Generic Trip Risks

Hazard	Is the risk adequately controlled	What further action is necessary to control the risk
Drowning	Buoyancy aids recommended to be worn. All paddlers can swim 50m	Pre-trip briefing to warn of hazards which might cause a capsize or fall into the water
Hypothermia	All paddlers to wear appropriate clothing and to have a spare set of clothes in case of capsize. Trip leaders to take along a spare XXL cag (for putting on over the BA of a cold paddler) and a spare woolly hat.	Pre-trip briefing to warn of hazards which might cause a capsize or fall into the water
River hazards	Make paddlers aware of hazards. Keep a sharp lookout for any upcoming hazards such as weirs, fishermen and floating debris	Pre-trip briefing to warn of hazards
Collision with boats, bridge piers etc	Keep a sharp lookout for other boats and river traffic	Pre-trip briefing to warn of hazards
Fatigue	Ensure all paddlers are rested and eat and drink sufficiently	Pre-trip briefing and monitoring of all paddlers during the trip.
Dehydration	Ensure all paddlers drink sufficiently	Pre-trip briefing and monitoring of all paddlers during the trip.
Road crossings	Help paddlers crossing roads with a boat	Pre-trip briefing to warn of hazards

Appendix A – Wey Navigation locks and distances

Wey navigation ready reckoner

Lock/pub/etc	Parking/Access	Toilets	Food	Miles	Phone	Trip distances in miles		
Shepperton Lock	Parking by lock	x	Teas at lock (summer)	0.0				19.8
Minnow Pub		x	x	0.1				19.7
Thames Lock				0.2	01932 43106			19.6
Weybridge Town Lock	Weystone Road CP, low barrier			0.8		0.0		19.0
Black Boy Bridge	Easy parking in road before bridge			1.0		0.2		18.8
Pelican Pub	Easy parking in the road	x	x	1.3	01932 47956	0.5		18.5
Coxes Lock				1.5		0.7		18.3
Adlestone Canoe club				1.9		1.1		17.9
White Hart Inn		x	x	2.2	01932 42927	1.4		17.6
New Haw lock	Easy parking above lock			2.3		1.5	0.0	17.5
Woodham Junction				3.0		2.2	0.7	16.8
Parvis Wharf	?	?	Tea rooms / boat hire (seasonal?)	3.5		2.7	1.2	16.3
The Anchor Pub	Pub car park open from 10am	x	x	5.0	01932 34207	4.2	0.0	14.8



Pyrford Lock	Very limited parking + pub CP			5.1		4.3	0.1	2.8			14.7
Walsham Gates*				6.1		5.3	1.1	3.8			13.7
Newark lock				6.7		5.9	1.7	4.4	0.0		13.1
Newark Priory	Low barrier - careful with roof rack			7.0		6.2	2.0	4.7	0.3		12.8
Papercourt Lock				7.5		6.7	2.5	5.2	0.8		12.3
Old tannery	Some parking			7.8		7.0	2.8	5.5	1.1		12.0
New Inn @ Send	Street parking + pub CP	x	x	8.7	01483 62736	7.9	3.7	6.4	2.0	0.0	11.1
Worsfold Gates*				8.9			3.9		2.2	0.2	10.9
Triggs Lock				9.8			4.8				10.0
Bowers Lock				11.9					5.2	3.2	7.9
Stoke Lock				13.0					6.3	4.3	6.8
Wey KC	Easy parking in road by grass			13.7			0.0		7.0	5.0	6.1
Dapdune Wharf (NT)		x	x	14.6	01483 61389		0.9		7.9	5.9	5.2
Millmead Lock (Guildford)	Parking in shoppers car park			15.4			1.7		8.7	6.7	4.4
St Catherine's Lock				16.5			2.8			7.8	3.3
Unstead Lock (Peasmarsh)				17.8			4.1			9.1	2.0
The Manor Inn		x	x	18.7			5.0			10.0	1.1
Hectors tea rooms	?	x	x	18.9			5.2			10.2	0.9
Catteshall Lock	Street parking			19.0			5.3			10.3	0.8
Godalming Wharf				19.6			5.9			10.9	0.2
Godalming Town Bridge				19.8			6.1			11.1	0

*Walsham and Worsfold Gates are operated in times of flood only
Godalming Wharf is the upper limit of navigation for powered craft

Appendix B – Basingstoke Canal locks and distances

Basingstoke Canal distances and facilities

	Vehicle Access	Locks	Miles		
New Haw - Wey	Easy above lock		0.7	0.0	31.9
Woodham Junction		0	0.0	0.7	31.2
Woodham bottom lock		1	0.3	1.0	30.9
Woodham lock #2		2	0.7	1.4	30.5
Woodham lock #3		3	1.2	1.9	30.0
Woodham lock #4		4	1.3	2.0	29.9
Woodham lock #5		5	1.5	2.2	29.7
Woodham top lock #6		6	1.6	2.3	29.6
Bridge Barn Pub	Pub car park		4.8	5.5	26.5
Goldsworth bottom lock		7	5.3		25.9
Goldsworth lock #8		8	5.4		25.8
Goldsworth lock #9		9	5.6		25.6
Goldsworth lock #10		10	5.7		25.5
Goldsworth top lock #11		11	5.8		25.4
Brookwood bottom lock #12		12	7.4		23.8
Brookwood lock #13		13	7.5		23.7
Brookwood top lock #14		14	7.6		23.6
Frimley bottom lock #15		15	8.5	4.7	22.7
Frimley lock #16		16	8.8	4.4	22.5
Frimley lock #17		17	8.9	4.2	22.3
Frimley lock #18		18	9.1	4.0	22.1



Frimley lock #19		19	9.3		3.8		21.9
Frimley lock #20		20	9.5		3.7		21.7
Frimley lock #21		21	9.6		3.5		21.6
Frimley lock #22		22	9.7		3.4		21.5
Frimley lock #23		23	9.8		3.3		21.4
Frimley lock #24		24	10.0		3.2		21.2
Frimley lock #25		25	10.1		3.0		21.1
Frimley lock #26		26	10.3		2.8		20.9
Frimley lock #27		27	10.4		2.7		20.8
Frimley top lock #28		28	10.7		2.4		20.5
Mytchett	Car park / café/ toilets		13.1	0.0	0	13.1	18.1
Ash Vale	Station car park		14.2	1.1		12.1	17.0
Ash lock #29		29	16.4	3.3		9.8	14.8
Wharf bridge, Aldershot	Car park		17.8	4.7		8.4	13.4
Eelmoor bridge	Street parking		19.2	6.1		7.1	12.0
Pondtail Bridge	Street parking		20.7	7.6		5.5	10.5
Reading Rd	Car park		21.7	8.6		4.5	9.5
Fox and Hounds Pub	Pub + street parking		22.3	9.2		3.9	8.9
Crookham Wharf	Car park		23.8	10.7		2.5	7.4
Barley Mow	Public car park		26.3	13.1	0.0	0.0	5.0
Colt Hill Bridge / Waterwitch	Public car park		28.9	15.8	2.7		2.3
N Warnborough lift bridge	Some parking		30.3	17.2	4.1		0.9
Odiham Castle			30.5	17.4	4.3		0.7
Whitewater winding hole			30.6	17.5	4.4		0.6
Greywell Tunnel			31.2	18.1	5.0		0